

Vashon Wastewater Treatment Plant Project Update

February 2005

New marine outfall completed in October

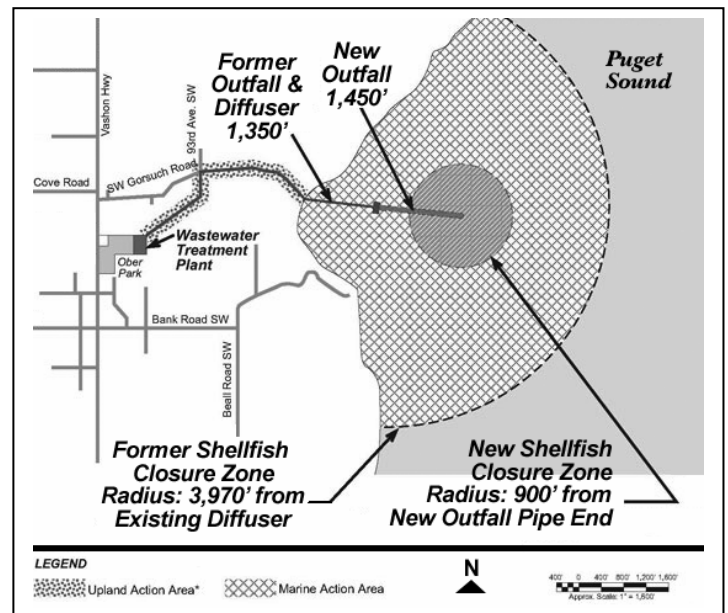
Construction of the marine outfall extension for the Vashon Wastewater Treatment Plant was completed in October 2004. The outfall was extended 1,450 feet, well out of the range of geoduck beds in the area. The extended outfall will result in increased dilution and be better for the environment of Puget Sound.

Abandoned fishing gear removed

Abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear can present safety and environmental issues in marine waters. Locating and safely removing this derelict fishing gear reduces the threat to divers and sea life.

Funding from King County was provided to the Northwest Straits Commission to remove derelict fishing gear in Puget Sound as part of a mitigation measure for the treatment plant outfall extension. Divers conducted removal operations in August 2004 at two high priority locations, Colvos Passage and Shilshole Bay, both along important salmon migration runs.

Seventeen derelict gill nets (a total of 229,000 square feet or 5.3 acres of gill nets) were removed from these two sites. All the gill nets removed were believed to present a lethal threat to marine life because of their generally good condition and their location suspended in the water column. The gill nets were removed from water depths of 45 to 105 feet.



Construction delayed on treatment plant expansion; soil management plan being developed for construction site soils affected by smelter plume

Hollinger Construction began work on upgrades to the Vashon Wastewater Treatment Plant in late October. Construction was temporarily suspended in January after a shallow surface soil sample was found with low to moderate levels of arsenic, lead and cadmium.

Studies over the last 30 years show that soils on portions of Vashon and Maury Islands, mainland coastal areas of south King County and portions of Pierce County have elevated concentrations of arsenic, lead and cadmium. Those high concentrations of metal are probably due to copper smelting at the Asarco plant in Ruston, which operated from 1890 to 1986.

Samples taken in 2002 at the treatment plant site showed lead and arsenic levels below the state Model Toxic Control Act's cleanup level for unrestricted land use. After the January 2005 soil sample showed levels higher than this state level, scientists took 90 samples throughout the site to determine the extent of metals contamination and to develop a soil management plan to address the safety of workers, the public and the environment.

Plans to manage the soils at the Vashon Wastewater Treatment Plant site will be consistent with guidelines outlined by the state Department of Ecology and the Area-Wide Soil Contamination Task Force. Workers on site will receive special

training. The main potential health risk posed by the contaminated soils is from either inhalation of dust or ingestion. To reduce the risk to the public, access to the site is restricted. There is no danger to the public unless people trespass onto the construction site.

Next steps

Negotiations with the contractor are taking place with everyone's goal being getting back to work with precautions in place to ensure the safety of workers, the public and the environment.

This delay will have impacts to the Vashon Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade construction schedule and project budget. Negotiations are under way, and we will keep you informed about the updated schedule and budget when available. Any increased project costs will be borne by King County's sewer ratepayer base in its entirety. Rates to Vashon Sewer District are limited by a fixed formula in the sewage disposal agreement between the district and the county.

The State Environmental Policy Act, or SEPA, provides a way to identify possible environmental impacts that may result from proposed projects. King County has prepared an addendum to the SEPA Determination of Non-significance and environmental checklist issued in August 2003 to provide information regarding the new soils management plan for the project. For additional information or a copy of this addendum, please contact Katherine McKee at 206-263-3197 or Sue Meyer at 206-684-1171.

Resources on smelter metals

For more information, check the following Web sites.

The Public Health- Seattle King County has some excellent tips on soil safety guidelines for inside and outside your home. Check its Web site at <http://www.metrokc.gov/health/tsp/index.htm> or call 206-296-4692.

The Washington Department of Ecology Web site can be found at http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/tacoma_smelter/ts_hp.htm.

May Gerstle is on the Heavy Metals Remediation Committee of the Vashon-Maury Island Community Council. She can be reached with questions at 206-463-0974.

Project background

Vashon Sewer District contracted with King County in 1999 to treat the wastewater of its customers. Then, the system was experiencing many violations of the plant's discharge permits for not meeting effluent standards. King County's expertise in wastewater treatment and financing was needed to solve serious problems.

The county carried out many interim steps to improve the plant operation. The plant is now doing an adequate job and rarely experiences violations. However, it is at capacity for the amount of incoming waste and flows, and it doesn't have sufficient backup systems. Without these backup systems, if one piece of the system malfunctions, the quality of treatment will be jeopardized and repairs will be extremely costly.

The plant upgrades will increase capacity and add and enhance backup systems. After three years of community outreach, design and permitting, construction on the treatment plant upgrades began the fall of 2004. As mentioned earlier in this update, moving the marine outfall farther out in the Puget Sound has been completed. All these improvements are needed to meet regulatory requirements and will protect human health and the environment.

For more information:

- Contact Jo Sullivan by phone at 206-296-8361 or e-mail at jo.sullivan@metrokc.gov for more information and answers to your questions and concerns.
- Call the 24-hour hotline at **206-205-9181**.

Check the Web at <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wtd/vashon>

Alternative formats on request by calling 206-296-8361 (voice) or 711 (TTY).